AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Cancelled)

2. (Currently Amended)   A laser welding method, comprising:

varying a waveform and a frequency of a laser output in a controlled manner so as to prevent occurrence of weld defects;

detecting a time change in ultraviolet light emission strength of a plasma or a plume generated from a laser welded portion;

analyzing frequency characteristics of the ultraviolet light emission to obtain an amplitude of a frequency component which is a same variation frequency of the laser output; and

setting a laser output variation condition such as the waveform and the frequency so that the amplitude of the frequency component becomes a maximum.

3. (Currently Amended)   A laser welding method, comprising:

varying a waveform and a frequency of a laser output in a controlled manner so as to prevent occurrence of weld defects;

detecting a time change in ultraviolet light emission strength of a plasma or a plume generated from a laser welded portion;

setting an arbitrary threshold value to the time change in the ultraviolet light emission strength of the plasma or the plume; and

setting a laser output variation condition so that a sum of time at which the ultraviolet light emission strength becomes the threshold value or less is a minimum,

wherein laser output variation condition is set such that the sum of the time at which the ultraviolet light emission strength becomes the threshold value or less is set to a range between 2ms to 12ms.

4. (Cancelled)

5. (Currently Amended)   The laser welding method according to claim 2, further comprising:

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setting an arbitrary threshold value to the time change in the <u>ultraviolet</u> light emission strength of the plasma or the plume, and

setting the laser output variation condition so that a sum of time at which the <u>ultraviolet</u> light emission strength becomes the threshold value or less is a minimum,

wherein laser output variation condition is set such that the sum of the time at which the <u>ultraviolet</u> light emission strength becomes the threshold value or less is set to a range between 2ms to 12 ms.

6-7. (Cancelled)